

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Thomas A. Fiore, Chairman (2004)
Maurice M. DePalo, Vice-Chairman (2005)
Bruce R. Card, Clerk (2005)
John I. Lebeaux (2004)
Philip Hammond (2006)

MEETINGS

The Board of Selectmen meets 2 Monday evenings per month in formal session at 7:00 P.M. in the Selectmen's Meeting Room, except on holidays. The purpose of these regular meetings is to conduct public hearings, discuss and review policy with the manager, and conduct the general business of the Town of Shrewsbury. In addition the Board has held a series of intensive and detailed workshops to further the Board's understanding of the topics facing the town. These informational sessions have typically led to establishing goals and priorities for Shrewsbury. The topics covered include Planning and Land Use, Finance, and Public Works. The meetings are broadcast live on Shrewsbury Public Access Channel 35 and are replayed at other times for public convenience. The meeting schedule is available by visiting or contacting the Selectmen's Office (508-841-8504) or by accessing the Town's Internet Web Site (www.shrewsbury-ma.gov)

In addition, the Board also holds an annual Legislative Meeting in February. The attendees include Congressman James P. Mc Govern, State Senator Guy Glodis, State Representative Karyn E. Polito and a variety of other elected town officials and town department heads. The meeting provides a forum for the Board to discuss with the town's legislative delegation how various federal and state laws, policies and programs affect the Town of Shrewsbury. The meeting is one of the highlights of the Selectmen's yearly activities, as it provides for an excellent exchange of ideas and the opportunity for the town officials to have their thoughts and ideas put before our legislators.

The Board also continues to produce the Selectmen's Roundtable, a cable access television program aired on channel 35. While no official business is conducted, the program allows the selectmen to discuss public issues and topics of interest in an informal manner. The program airs several times per week. New shows are aired every two weeks.

BOARD MEMBERS

At the Annual Town election held on May 3, 2003, Philip Hammond was re-elected to the Board of Selectmen for a three-year term. The board was organized as follows: Thomas A. Fiore, Chairman; Maurice M. DePalo, Vice-Chairman; Bruce Card, Clerk.

TOWN MANAGER

The Board of Selectmen continues to be very pleased with the performance of Daniel Morgado as Town Manager. He continues to demonstrate a mastery of the complex financial and budgetary issues which face the town. His advocacy for a fiscally conservative approach to the administration of town government has allowed the town to continue to enjoy a superior level of services while maintaining one of the lowest tax rates and actual tax bills per households in the area.

Mr. Morgado continues to develop and empower the department heads. The evidence of his success in this area is the high level of professional conduct and performance by not only the department heads, but also all town employees.

Because of the Board's continued confidence and approval of the manager's performance, it voted to approve a new 3-year contract for the manager to expire in September 2006. This marks the third 3-year contract for Mr. Morgado.

ACTIVITIES AND ISSUES

In addition to exercising its licensing and permitting authority, the Selectmen participated in a number of community activities throughout the year and studied various issues affecting our Town. Some of these are described below.

50th Anniversary of The Adoption of the Limited Town meeting Act & Town Manager Act

November 3, 2003 marked the 50th Anniversary of the adoption of the Limited Town meeting Act & Town Manager Act. These two acts (home rule petitions approved by the Legislature and the governor) set the basis for the modern form of government that governs the Town of Shrewsbury Town Meeting and operation of Shrewsbury Town Meeting. To acknowledge this historic date in Shrewsbury's history, the Board invited all living former members of the Board of Selectmen to attend the anniversary meeting. In all, eleven former members were able to attend, as well as the three town meeting members who have served continuously since the representative Town Meeting was established. It is interesting to note that since the inception of this form of government, there have been only 27 members of the Board (including the 5 sitting members) and three town managers (one of whom, Mr. Richard Carney served for 40 years). This is a

testament to the stability of town government since the inception of these acts. Further, the acts set the groundwork for one of the most efficient models of town government in Massachusetts.

School Committee Vacancy

In September, the School Committee notified The Board that Nancy Hochstein had resigned from the committee due to health and personal reasons. This necessitated a joint appointment by the Board and the remaining School Committee members to fill out the balance of Mrs. Hochstein's term. After receiving letters of interest from several residents of the town, the two bodies held a joint meeting on October 14, 2003 at which time Alden Harris III was voted unanimously to fill the vacancy.

New Precinct 9 Location

The sale of the Knights of Columbus Hall on South Street necessitated the relocation of the Polling location for Precinct Nine. The Town Clerk approached the Liberty Assembly of God Church at 459 Hartford Turnpike which agreed to allow its hall to be used as a polling location. As it was important to find a location within or close to the boundaries of Precinct Nine, the Board voted to approve the change in the polling place to this new location. All voters in the precinct were notified of the change to the new location.

Annual MMA Convention

The Board has regularly attended the Massachusetts Municipal Association Convention in Boston. However, this meeting proved to be the most sobering of recent years. At the MMA annual meeting, newly inaugurated Governor Mitt Romney announced that he was seeking approval of the Legislature to expand his "9C" Powers which would allow him to reduce the distribution of local aid that had already been appropriated from fiscal year 2003 by 10%. This resulted in approximately \$621,000 in cuts in local aid to Shrewsbury. Due to very conservative budgeting by the Town Manager for FY 2003 and withholding approved spending in various categories throughout town government, Shrewsbury was able to absorb the cuts with little impact in the delivery of town services.

Cherry St. Connector

The Cherry St Connector Road project, which will realign the Southern end of Cherry Street with the North side of Cherry Street at Route 20, was bid and the contract awarded in the last quarter of 2003. This joint effort of the Worcester Business Development Corporation and the Town of Shrewsbury will provide a signalized intersection at Cherry Street and Route 20, as well as provide direct access to Centech Park and the Grafton MBTA Stop. The Town Manager's Office, in particular Michael Hale, Assistant Town Manager deserve much credit for securing the funding and negotiating the complicated land exchanges necessary to see this project come to fruition. Work is expected to be completed in late 2004.

EDIC / Shrewsbury Development Corporation

Governor Jane Swift signed section 7 of Chapter 493 of the Acts of 2002 creating the Shrewsbury Development Corporation into law on her last day in office. As provided for in the legislation, the Board made official the appointment of the seven members to the corporation with staggering 5 year terms. Previously these members had been interviewed and appointed as an implementation committee for the purpose of jumpstarting the work process awaiting passage of the legislation into law.

The Corporation worked throughout the year on plans to develop the Allen property (purchased earlier by the town) into a commercial/ high tech park. The corporation has entered into a partnership with the Worcester Business Development Corporation to accomplish this task. The intent is to add high value, non-residential property to the tax rolls.

When Alden Harris III resigned from the Shrewsbury Development Corporation upon Appointment to the School Committee, Gregory Riedel was appointed to fill the vacancy.

CATV renewal, CATV rate increase

In the spring, The Board, as the licensing authority, held a public hearing regarding the extension of the cable TV license held by the Shrewsbury Electric Light Plant. As a result the Board found that the Shrewsbury Community Cablevision had substantially complied with the terms of the existing franchise agreement and with applicable law, and that quality of service including signal quality had been reasonable in regards to the community's needs, and that Shrewsbury Community Cablevision has the facilities, services, finances and the equipment to meet the community's current and future needs. As a result the Board voted to renew the license for a period of 10 years, ending on March 28, 2003.

In May, the Board held a public hearing regarding a proposed rate increase by Shrewsbury Community Cablevision. The request for the increase was driven primarily by the added cost to the system of various channels within the lineup. In June, the Board approved a rate increase from \$11.00 to \$13.70/ month for basic service and from \$27.55 to \$30.55/ month for expanded basic cable service.

High School/Middle School Building Committee

The High School/ Middle School Building Committee consists of the following members: Henry Fitzgerald, Chairman, Daniel Morgado, Town Manager, Anthony Bent, Superintendent of Schools, Maurice M. DePalo, Selectman, Robert Cox, Superintendent of Public Buildings, Richard Carney, John Masiello, Sandra McManus, and Pat Sacco.

While the new high school has opened and is serving the 8th –12th grade student population, the work of the committee on this project has not ended. There remains to be settled various claims by both the town and the general contractor. Currently several issues are in litigation and will most likely be settled in the courts. Work continues as the committee works to get the contractor to complete items on the closeout punch list.

The renovation of the former high school into the Oak Middle School has proceeded at a very slow, but steady pace. The committee remains concerned that the general contractor, Standen Contracting, Inc. will not have the work completed on time and ready for the school to open. Even though the committee decided to extend the time period for the building to be constructed and at substantial completion by May 2004, the general contractor has not demonstrated the ability to meet the date.

In addition to the slow pace, a fire in an area covering slightly more than 2 classrooms in May 2003 has slowed the work further as the committee agreed to allow the general contractor 2 additional months to complete the work. Even with this extension the committee remains concerned about the schedule. Despite all of this, the committee does remain confident that the project will be completed within the budgeted amount.

There will be major policy and redistricting issues for the School Department if the project is not completed on time for the 2004-2005 school year.

Water Issues

The Board, in its capacity as the Water Commission, made several major changes in the Rules and Regulations for the water department. After discussions with DEP regarding compliance with the town's water withdrawal permits and to reduce per capita consumption of water, the Board voted to impose a \$1,000 connection fee for new home connections. The money derived from the fee will be used to fund water conservation programs. DEP has stated that Shrewsbury should be reducing its water consumption to 65 gallons per capita per day. Currently the town is at 91 gallons per capita per day. Part of the reasoning of DEP on this lower rate is due to complicated calculations based on interbasin transfer, the withdrawing of water for water from one watershed and discharging to another.

The Board also voted to prohibit new in ground irrigation systems from being connected to the municipal water system, as these system can consume large amounts of water in the summer water season.

In an effort to further discourage unnecessary consumption of municipal water, the Board in June implanted a new rate structure for residential users. The new structure was designed to be revenue neutral, but rates were adjusted so that the rates increased with increased usage. Low volume users saw a minor decrease in their rates.

The Board once again voted to impose restrictions on outdoor watering for the spring and summer. The restrictions were as follows; Monday prohibited; even numbered addresses were allowed to water on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday; odd numbered addresses were allowed to water on Wednesday, Friday and Sunday.

The Town of Shrewsbury continues with its long range plans to upgrade and improve the water system to insure that our residents have adequate water for domestic and public safety purposes well into the 21st century.

Traffic and Roadways

After months of hearings, research and discussion, the Board vote to rescind the traffic regulations that created speed zones of various speeds on South Quinsigamond Avenue. The Board viewed the speed limits in some places to be artificially low and at best inconsistent along both the north and south travel lanes. With the approval of Mass Highway, the Board rescinded the regulations and posted instead Thickly Settled 30 MPH signs on the roadway consistent with the legal speed limit for thickly settled areas.

The work on reconstructing the roadway and associated work at the intersection of Route 140 and Main Street started in the early part of the spring. Most of the major underground utility work has been completed. Sidewalk realign has been started. The Spring and Summer of 2004 will see work on widening portions of the intersection on Main Street westbound approaching the intersection and Route 140 southbound at the Town Common. Work will be completed in the Fall of 2004.

The reconstruction of the Route 9 and Quinsigamond Avenue intersection is expected to begin in the Summer-Fall of 2004. This state funded and controlled project has been a longtime goal of the Board and it is pleased to see that it has made its way through the approval process and will become a reality. Its completion promises to relieve traffic congestion and the accident rate at this very busy crossroad.

Affordable Housing

Even as housing starts have continued and renovations of existing houses has grown, the town continues to be frustrated in having less than 10% of its housing termed affordable. Because of this, the town remains vulnerable to the prospect of so-called “40B” affordable housing proposals.

In the Fall, Avalon Bay Development approached the Town with a 300 unit affordable housing development to be located on Route 20. In contrast to traditional adversarial process of 40B applications, Avalon asked the Board to accept using the Local Initiative Program (LIP) to achieve the 40B approval. In this process, the developer and community work together to shape the project in a cooperative environment

Working with Judi Barrett, a planning and housing consultant, dialogue between the Town and Avalon Bay reached an agreement on the project. The Board decided to support the application to the State.

The project will now move through the approval process, including a Zoning Board of Appeals hearing for approval. Construction could begin as early as mid 2004.

An added benefit to having the project developed in a cooperative manner is that less 3-bedroom units will be built than originally proposed, helping to hold down additional growth in the school population due to this development. Additionally, approval of this large project will provide the town with a one-year moratorium on other such project.

S.T.A.R.

In October, the Board voted to join STAR, an organization of predominately western towns that is primarily advocating for the Commonwealth to pay its obligations of payments in lieu of taxes for state-owned property to the cities and towns throughout the Commonwealth. In the period from FY99- FY04 Shrewsbury has not been paid approximately \$750,000 from this program.

Memberships

The Board of Selectmen is active in the Massachusetts Municipal Association and the Massachusetts Selectmen’s Association. Selectman Bruce Card currently serves as president of the Worcester County Selectmen’s Association.